

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 3796

S E C R E T ATHENS 3745

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, GR

SUBJECT: REGIME EXPLOITATION OF FMS AGREEMENT

REF: STATE 128283

1. SUMMARY. CONCUR FULLY IN DEPARTMENT'S CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE EXPLOITATION BY GREEK REGIME OF AIRCRAFT SALES AGREEMENT. BELIEVE APPROACH TO BGEN IOANNIDES SHOULD BE COUPLED WITH JOINT US-GOG ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE SALE.

END SUMMARY.

2. EMBASSY SHARES DEPT'S APPREHENSION OVER POSSIBLE GREEK EXPLOITATION OF THE AIRCRAFT AGREEMENT. WE BELIEVE PUBLICITY COULD TAKE SEVERAL DIRECTIONS INCLUDING PRESS CAMPAIGN TO CONSTRUE AGREEMENT AS USG APPROBATION OF REGIME OR USG SHOW OF SUPPORT FOR GREECE IN ITS DISPUTE WITH TURKEY OVER THE AEGEAN. COMMENTS BY HAF CHIEF PAPANIKOLAOU (SEE ATHENS 3723) AND MFA AMBASSADOR TZOUNIS (SEE ATHENS 3724) INDICATIVE OF GREEK THINKING.

3. SINCE IT IS INEVITABLE THAT NEWS OF THE SALE WILL BECOME PUBLIC, WE SUGGEST DEPARTMENT DRAFT FOR PUBLICATION MONDAY, JUNE 17, A PRESS RELEASE KEYED DIRECTLY TO SECRETARY KISSINGER'S JUNE 7 STATEMENTS TO THE SFRC, AND RELATING SALE STRICTLY TO U.S. AND NATO INTERESTS IN GREECE. IN SO DOING, WE CAN MAKE OUR CASE IN STRONGEST, MOST

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POSITIVE MANNER POSSIBLE. WE WILL ALSO AVOID THE SPECULA-

TION AND MISINFORMATION THAT COULD ARISE OUT OF HAPHAZARD LEAKAGE OF THE NEWS. IN ANY PRESS PLAY WHICH FOLLOWS, SPOKESMAN SHOULD SEPARATE SALE AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE FROM EXISTING REGIME. HE SHOULD STRESS THAT USG SUPPORT OF GREEK PEOPLE IN THE FULFILLMENT OF THEIR NATO COMMITMENT IN OUR VIEW TRANSCENDS QUESTIONS OF DOMESTIC POLITICS.

4. WE PROPOSE PASSING DRAFT ANNOUNCEMENT TO HAF JUNE 17 IN TIME TO ALLOW JOINT PUBLICATION IF THE GOG SO DESIRES.

5. AT THE SAME TIME EMBASSY WILL ARRANGE TO PASS DIRECTLY TO IOANNIDES A COPY OF U. S. PRESS RELEASE ON AIRCRAFT SALES. IN ADDITION TO POINTS MADE IN RELEASE, WE WILL STRESS TO HIM THE U. S. WOULD DEEPLY REGRET IF GREEK PRESS WAS ENCOURAGED OR INDUCED TO BELIEVE THESE AIRCRAFT SALES BEAR ANY RELATION TO GREECE'S DIFFERENCES WITH TURKEY. WE WOULD POINT OUT THAT SUCH EXPLOITATION OF SALE FOR POLITICAL PURPOSES MIGHT WELL INDUCE ELEMENTS IN CONGRESS TO PUSH FOR PROHIBITION ON FMS CREDITS AND OTHER TYPES OF MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO GREECE. BY MAKING THESE POINTS, I BELIEVE HE ALSO WILL GET POINT THAT AIRCRAFT SALES NOT TO BE RELATED TO REGIME.
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